



Australian Government  
The Treasury



**Competition**  
Review

# National licensing for electrical occupations

Issues paper

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# Consultation Process

## Purpose of the paper

This paper seeks information and views to inform the development of a national licensing scheme for electrical occupations. Feedback from electrical workers, businesses, consumers, and professional bodies, including industry representatives and unions, is important to ensure any new arrangements are effective.

Questions are included throughout the paper to guide comments. You are invited to answer some or all the questions, or to comment on issues more broadly.

## How to make a submission

The closing date for submissions is 26 September 2025.

Email	<a href="mailto:CompetitionTaskforce@treasury.gov.au">CompetitionTaskforce@treasury.gov.au</a>
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Enquiries Enquiries can be initially directed to [CompetitionTaskforce@treasury.gov.au](mailto:CompetitionTaskforce@treasury.gov.au)

While submissions may be lodged electronically or by post, electronic lodgement is preferred. For accessibility reasons, please submit responses sent via email in a Word or RTF format. An additional PDF version may also be submitted.

All information (including name and address details) contained in formal submissions will be made available to the public on the Australian Treasury website, unless you indicate that you would like all or part of your submission to remain confidential. Automatically generated confidentiality statements in emails do not suffice for this purpose. Respondents who would like part of their submission to remain confidential should provide this information marked as such in a separate attachment.

Legal requirements, such as those imposed by the Freedom of Information Act 1982, may affect the confidentiality of your submission.

## Consultation process and next steps

The Competition Taskforce will continue to work with state and territory governments to consult with a range of stakeholders on the proposal. The Taskforce will also continue to gather and review evidence, including undertaking analysis of data related to current occupational licensing arrangements.

Following consideration of the views expressed through this consultation process, the Taskforce will work with states and territories to develop a proposed approach to reform and implementation. The Taskforce will then engage in further consultation on the final scheme design.

# A national licensing scheme for electrical occupations

## Background

### Why licence?

Occupational licensing can benefit consumers, workers and the broader community by ensuring workers are qualified to provide services at an acceptable level of safety and quality. Licensing can provide an important signal to consumers, who otherwise may not be able to easily determine whether a worker possesses the training and skills needed to provide services competently and safely. It can also ensure that workers only enter more risky occupations once they have sufficient training or qualifications to do so safely.

While licensing provides benefits, overly restrictive licensing requirements also impose costs. By definition, licensing raises barriers to entry and restricts labour mobility. Where this unnecessarily restricts competition, this can result in higher prices, reduced choice and potentially, lower quality. Restrictive licensing requirements may also reduce productivity growth by limiting the ability of occupations to evolve as technology and consumer demands change.<sup>1</sup>

Differences in licence requirements between jurisdictions make it harder for workers to move across borders for work, raising the costs to employers of filling job vacancies and expanding their business. Where licensing is unnecessarily restrictive or misaligned with the regulatory objective, this can also create and exacerbate skill shortages and make it harder for people to change occupations.

### Australia's electrical industry

Electrical occupations are vital to the Australian economy. The electrotechnology sector employs over 241,000 employees across over 56,000 businesses<sup>2</sup> in key industries such as building and construction, mining and utilities.<sup>3</sup>

Most electrical workers require a licence to work in Australia. Regulatory requirements and processes for electrical workers are managed differently in each of the eight states and territories (states), and each state has different categories of electrical licences (Box 1).

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) have persistently identified electricians and other electrical trades as 'in shortage'.<sup>4</sup> An adequate supply of skilled electrical workers will continue to be critical for the delivery of several national priorities including the Government's clean energy commitments<sup>5</sup> and Housing

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- 1 Bowman, Hambur and Markovski (2024), *Examining the Macroeconomic Costs of Occupational Entry Regulations*, [Examining the Macroeconomic Costs of Occupational Entry Regulations](#).
  - 2 National Electrical and Communications Association (2025), *Australia's Productivity*, <https://www.neca.asn.au/getmedia/1227827f-27c6-442d-ad68-570341155a1a/NECA-Productivity-Commission-Pillar-1.pdf>.
  - 3 JSA (2025), *Electricians Occupation Profile*, <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-and-industry-profiles/occupations/3411-electricians>.
  - 4 JSA (2024), *Occupation Shortage Analysis*, <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-shortages-analysis>.
  - 5 JSA (2023), *Clean Energy Capacity Study*, <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/research/studies/clean-energy-capacity-study>.

Accord targets (Figure 1), as well as manufacturing, critical minerals and the defence industry.<sup>6</sup> A nationally-mobile electrical workforce will also assist in meeting local surges in demand across the country, such as enabling the timely development of major infrastructure projects or supporting recovery efforts following natural disasters.

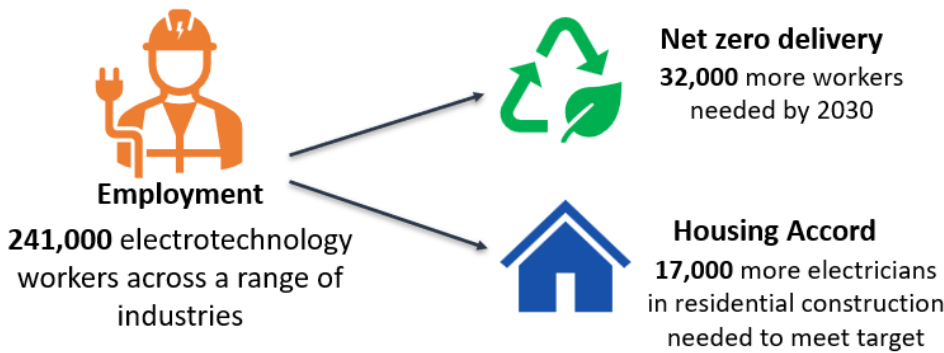
**Box 1: Categories of electrical occupations and licences**

Electrical trades encompass a wide range of occupations and job types. For example, electrical tradespeople work across residential, commercial, industrial, mining, construction, renewable energy and other fields. States also vary in how different job types relate to their licensing schemes. Some common electrical licence types include:

- **Contractor licences** enable individuals or businesses to contract and advertise to perform electrical work as a sole trader, partnership or company.
- **Unrestricted electrical licences** enable individuals to undertake a broad scope of general electrical work without direct supervision. To obtain this licence, workers must obtain a Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician and typically complete an apprenticeship under the supervision of a licensed electrician.
- **Linesworker licences** enable individuals to undertake electrical work on overhead and underground power lines.
- **Restricted electrical licences** enable individuals to undertake specific types of limited electrical work, but not more general electrical work.

The sub-categories and eligibility requirements for the different electrical licence types can vary significantly across jurisdictions, particularly for restricted electrical licences. For example, refrigeration and air-conditioning (RAC) mechanics in some jurisdictions are required to hold state-based licences in both restricted electrical work and RAC work, while also holding a national refrigerant handling licence issued by the Australian Refrigeration Council. Some electrical job types, such as linesworkers, do not require a specific licence to operate in all jurisdictions.

**Figure 1: Australia’s electrical workforce**



**The opportunity for reform**

Removing barriers to mobility and entry to the electrical industry could help address workforce shortages, increase productivity and grow the economy as whole. A harmonised national approach to electrical licensing could provide a balance that maintains or improves safety and quality standards without imposing excessive compliance costs.

On 23 March 2025, the Government announced it would work with states, territories, businesses and unions to design a national licensing scheme for electrical tradespeople.<sup>7</sup> The announcement stated

6 Housing Industry Association (2024), *All Hands on Deck: Construction Workforce Requirements*, <https://hia.com.au/our-industry/advocacy/workforce-requirements>.  
7 Chalmers (2025), *National licensing for electrical trades*, <https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/jim-chalmers-2022/media-releases/national-licensing-electrical-trades>.

that national licensing will enable people in electrical trades to work seamlessly across borders without reapplying for a separate licence or paying additional fees, allowing workers to go where they are needed most. The Government noted this reform will be good for workers and businesses and will make our economy more productive and competitive.

The design and implementation of the national licensing scheme will be progressed using the National Competition Policy (NCP) framework. In November 2024, the Australian, state and territory treasurers agreed to revitalise NCP by signing a new intergovernmental agreement and Federation Funding Agreement Schedule. NCP drives change by providing payments from the Australian Government to the states for pro-competitive reform, underpinned by a \$900 million National Productivity Fund. This licensing reform forms part of a broader labour mobility agenda announced by the Government, including reforms to non-compete clauses and the development of a national screening check for care and support workers (also progressing under NCP).

To inform the development of the scheme, the Government asked the Productivity Commission (PC) to provide advice and undertake modelling to estimate the benefits of reform.<sup>8</sup> The PC's interim report suggests that introducing national licensing for electrical trades could provide an ongoing boost to economic output of up to \$62 million per year.<sup>9</sup>

## Current licensing arrangements

### Licensing is regulated by the states and territories

Around one in five Australian workers require a registration or licence to perform their work, broadly consistent with comparable jurisdictions overseas (Box 2).<sup>10</sup> Most licensed occupations, including electrical trades, are regulated by the states under state-specific licensing regimes. Other occupations are self-regulated or operate under a co-regulatory framework (such as engineers), or a national scheme (such as health practitioners).

Licensing requirements vary between the eight jurisdictions. Even where requirements are broadly aligned, regulatory frameworks, legislation, terminology, and the classes or categories of work that are regulated can differ significantly. These differences may exist for historical reasons, such as policy decisions made in response to state-specific incidents or inquiries, or due to unique geographical or environmental conditions across states.<sup>11</sup> Licensing categories and supporting regulatory arrangements may also be influenced by the industrial bases of individual states and the relative importance of different activities when licensing arrangements were introduced.

While differences in regulation between jurisdictions may be appropriate where there are unique circumstances requiring targeted regulatory intervention, understanding these differences can impose significant costs on workers that seek to move between or work across jurisdictions. Where these costs are not commensurate with a measurable improvement in worker or consumer safety, or other policy objectives, such costs are likely to act as an unnecessary barrier to worker movement. These

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8 Productivity Commission (2025), *Request for advice*, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/competition-analysis-2025/request-advice>.

9 Productivity Commission (2025), *National Competition Policy analysis 2025*, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/competition-analysis-2025#interim>

10 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2021), *Improving occupational mobility*, <https://www.regulatoryreform.gov.au/sites/default/files/improving-occupational-mobility.pdf>.

11 Ibid.

differences make it harder for workers to move across borders for work, raising the costs to employers of filling job vacancies and reducing competition and choice for consumers.

#### Box 2: International approaches to licensing and mutual recognition

##### Canada

Approximately 15 per cent of Canadian workers operate in licensed occupations, with licensing and certification overseen by a different regulatory body in each province or territory.

The Canadian Free Trade Agreement allows licensed workers to be recognised as qualified to work in another Canadian jurisdiction which regulates that occupation, without undertaking significant additional training, work experience, examination or assessment. However, the Agreement does not provide for automatic or universal mutual recognition, with jurisdictions instead recognising licences through a case-by-case assessment while retaining the ability to exempt certain occupations and impose additional requirements on interstate workers.<sup>12</sup> The relatively new *Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act* also ensures that workers licensed in one jurisdiction do not need to obtain an additional federal licence for the same occupation.<sup>13</sup>

The 'Red Seal' Program is an optional, nationally-recognised certification that operates alongside the Canadian system of provincial licensing.<sup>14</sup> The Program, run jointly by federal and provincial governments, enables workers to undertake an exam to demonstrate their knowledge is up to the national standard.

##### European Union

Approximately 22 per cent of workers across the European Union (EU) are licensed. However, the prevalence and approach to licensing varies significantly across occupations and member states.<sup>15</sup>

The EU recognises occupational licences through two directives – the Professional Qualifications Directive and the Services Directive. While the Directives allow qualified workers to request recognition of their licence from a second member state, conditions and exemptions vary depending on the occupation, jurisdiction and system of recognition in each state.<sup>16</sup>

##### United States

Approximately 25 per cent of workers in the United States (US) are licensed, with licensing and recognition of interstate electricians regulated by state-level agencies.<sup>17</sup>

The US facilitates licensing recognition through opt-in reciprocity agreements between states. Where a state recognises an occupation, interstate workers can apply for reciprocity, however recognition is not automatic.<sup>18</sup> Through these agreements, state can impose varying fees, restrictions and requirements depending on the license type and work experience of the applicant.<sup>19</sup>

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- 12 Labour Mobility Working Group (2021), *Frequently Asked Questions for Workers*, <https://workersmobility.ca/faq-for-workers/>.
  - 13 Government of Canada (2025), *Implementation of Bill C-5: One Canadian Economy*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/intergovernmental-affairs/news/2025/06/implementation-of-bill-c-5-one-canadian-economy.html>.
  - 14 Canadian Council of Directors Apprenticeship (2024), *Red Seal Program*, <https://www.red-seal.ca/eng/about/program.shtml>.
  - 15 Koumenta and Pagliero (2017), *Occupational Licensing in the European Union: Coverage and Wage Effects*, <https://www.carloalberto.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/no.525.pdf>.
  - 16 Productivity Commission (2015), *Mutual recognition schemes*, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mutual-recognition-schemes/report>.
  - 17 OECD (2020), *Measuring occupational entry regulations: A new OECD approach*, [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2020/03/measuring-occupational-entry-regulations-a-new-oecd-approach\\_fdd72a54/296dae6b-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2020/03/measuring-occupational-entry-regulations-a-new-oecd-approach_fdd72a54/296dae6b-en.pdf).
  - 18 Jade Learning (2025), *Is Your Electrical License Accepted by Other States?*, <https://www.jadelearning.com/reciprocity-plan/>.
  - 19 Ibid.

## Mutual recognition

In 1992, Australian governments established a national framework for mutual recognition of occupational licences through the Intergovernmental Agreement on Mutual Recognition, given effect by the *Mutual Recognition Act 1992* and complementary state legislation. Mutual recognition enables a licensed worker to apply for another licence in a second jurisdiction for an equivalent occupation, without the need for further assessment of their qualifications, skills or experience.

Since its introduction in 1992, mutual recognition has helped to reduce barriers to occupational mobility across jurisdictions for a broad range of occupations. However, the effectiveness of the mutual recognition scheme has been limited by its complexity, cost and the regulatory burden it imposes on businesses and individuals providing services across jurisdictions. For example, many licensed workers wishing to work interstate under mutual recognition are required to complete additional paperwork and pay additional licence fees, often including an additional mutual recognition application fee.<sup>20</sup>

A range of other factors have impeded the success of the scheme, including difficulties in identifying licence equivalence across jurisdictions, extensive conditions imposed on interstate licensees to achieve equivalence, duplicate testing of applicants, difficulties in access to information and a lack of understanding of mutual recognition requirements by regulators.<sup>21</sup>

## Previous attempts at national licensing

In 2009, Australian governments signed the 'Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to establish a National Licensing System (NOLS) for Specified Occupations'. The IGA identified several occupations as suitable for national licensing, including electrical, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanics, building-related occupations, land transport, maritime, plumbing and gas-fitting, and property agents.<sup>22</sup>

The NOLS established the National Occupational Licensing Authority (NOLA), a national licensing body designed to develop policy and administer the system. NOLA was responsible for establishing standard procedures, a standard set of licence types and eligibility requirements, and, for each occupation, a single national licence that could be used in any Australian jurisdiction. It was also intended to develop and operate a national register of licensed occupations, which would include publicly accessible information on licence holders. The NOLA was supported by the National Occupation Licensing Board and Occupational Licensing Advisory Committees, both designed to provide advice on licensing policy.

The system was underpinned by a national licensing legislative framework. Under the IGA, governments agreed Victoria would host the substantive legislation to give effect to the national system, with other states to enact legislation to apply this system as law in their jurisdiction. In 2010, the Victorian Government gained royal assent to the *Occupational Licensing National Law Act*, with all but two jurisdictions enacting enabling legislation by June 2011.<sup>23</sup>

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20 Ibid.

21 National Occupational Licensing Authority (2014), *Submission to the Productivity Commission in relation to the Geographic Labour Mobility Draft Report*, [https://www.pc.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/134064/subdr053-labour-mobility.pdf](https://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/134064/subdr053-labour-mobility.pdf).

22 COAG (2009), *Intergovernmental Agreement for a National Licensing System for Specified Occupations*, [Intergovernmental Agreement for a National Licensing System for Specified Occupations](https://www.coag.gov.au/intergovernmental-agreement-for-a-national-licensing-system-for-specified-occupations).

23 ANZSOG (2016), *The National Occupational Licensing Project*, <https://anzsog.edu.au/research-insights-and-resources/research/national-occupational-licensing-project-the-nola-a-2016-177-1/>.

However, in December 2013, COAG decided not to proceed with the NOLS. Despite significant progress and investment, the majority of states announced they were withdrawing from the NOLS, citing concerns with the proposed model and its potential costs, as well as lost licence fee revenue.<sup>24,25</sup> Instead, states agreed to develop alternative options for minimising licensing impediments to improving labour mobility, and to manage the orderly disestablishment of the NOLA.<sup>26</sup> NOLA ended on 1 August 2014.<sup>27</sup>

## East Coast Electrician's Scheme

In 2014, NSW established the East Coast Electrician's Scheme, enabling automatic mutual recognition (AMR) for certain electrical licences between NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT. The scheme enables some licence holders to work temporarily across borders without requiring separate licences. For example, a Victorian resident holding a current Victorian electrician's licence can carry out work within the scope of the NSW equivalent licence without applying in NSW.<sup>28</sup>

However, implementation of the scheme differs across jurisdictions. For instance, electricians wishing to work in the ACT are not eligible for AMR under the scheme. NSW is the only jurisdiction that automatically recognises some contractor licences under the scheme as well as worker licences.<sup>29</sup> And, unlike other states within the scheme, Victoria requires interstate workers to notify the local regulator — Energy Safe Victoria — before undertaking work in Victoria.<sup>30</sup>

In a 2015 study, the PC suggested a 'gold standard' AMR system for electricians would feature elements of the approaches used by NSW, Victoria and Queensland, including automatic recognition of both worker and contractor licences from all Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand, supported by a notification requirement where necessary to regulate interstate workers.<sup>31</sup>

## National automatic mutual recognition (AMR) scheme

In its 2015 study, the PC found that, while mutual recognition arrangements were generally working well, there would be significant benefits for individuals and businesses from automating these processes across all occupations. In 2020, National Cabinet signed the IGA on Automatic Mutual Recognition (AMR) of Occupational Registration, with the Mutual Recognition Act amended to enable AMR in 2021.

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24 Senate Select Committee on Red Tape (2018), *Effect of red tape on occupational licensing*, [https://www.aph.gov.au/-/media/Committees/redtape\\_ctte/OccupationalLicensing/Interim\\_report/report.pdf](https://www.aph.gov.au/-/media/Committees/redtape_ctte/OccupationalLicensing/Interim_report/report.pdf).

25 SMH (2013), *COAG ditches national licensing scheme*, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/coag-ditches-national-licensing-scheme-20131213-2zc1s.html>.

26 Moseley (2013), *National licensing for estate agents dumped*, <https://www.theadviser.com.au/lender/29532-national-licensing-dumped>.

27 ANZSOG (2016), *The National Occupational Licensing Project*, <https://anzsog.edu.au/research-insights-and-resources/research/national-occupational-licensing-project-the-nola-a-2016-177-1/>.

28 Energy Safe Victoria (2015), *Submission to mutual recognition scheme study*, [https://www.pc.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/187335/sub026-mutual-recognition.pdf](https://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/187335/sub026-mutual-recognition.pdf).

29 NSW Government (2025), *Recognition under the East Coast Electrician's scheme*, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/licences-and-credentials/building-and-trade/licences-and-registrations/working-interstate-and-mutual-recognition/east-coast-electricians-scheme>.

30 Productivity Commission (2015), *Mutual recognition schemes*, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mutual-recognition-schemes/report>.

31 Ibid.

Unlike (manual) mutual recognition, AMR enables a licensed person in one jurisdiction to perform the same activities in another jurisdiction, without the need for further application processes or additional registration fees. The scheme intends to make it simpler, quicker and less expensive for people to work across jurisdictions, while maintaining high standards of consumer protection and worker and public health and safety.

At the time of commencement, a study estimated the reform would lead to an additional \$2.4 billion in economic activity over ten years due to savings to workers and businesses, productivity improvements and extra surge capacity to respond to natural disasters.<sup>32</sup> The reform was also estimated to benefit over 160,000 workers, including an additional 44,000 people who would be motivated to work interstate.<sup>33</sup>

AMR appears to be working well for electrical tradespeople in some jurisdictions. For example, Victoria recognises all equivalent electrical licences from all participating jurisdictions through AMR. Though in many cases, barriers remain.

## Barriers to mutual recognition remain

While the AMR scheme theoretically applies to all occupations covered by existing mutual recognition arrangements, this is not the case in practice. For example, Queensland has not passed enabling legislation and therefore does not participate in the scheme. States are also able to exempt certain licences from AMR where they determine there is a significant risk arising from particular circumstances or conditions in their jurisdiction — for example, to consumers, the environment, animal welfare or the health or safety of workers or the public. This means that some licences issued in some jurisdictions, including several electrical licences, are not automatically recognised in other jurisdictions.

Under current AMR arrangements, the reasons for jurisdictional differences in regulation are not clearly identified, and there is no systemic way of addressing them. Different state-based licensing schemes and methods for data collection and management also present challenges for regulators sharing information about workers who cross borders, including regarding cases of misconduct.

There is an opportunity to improve these outcomes through NCP, supported by PC modelling and analysis (Box 3). As part of the NCP IGA agreed in November 2024, all governments agreed to national competition principles, including to promote a single national market. By agreeing this principle, governments have committed to not create or entrench barriers to buying and selling goods and services, operating businesses, and working across state and territory and international borders, where appropriate.

### Questions

1. Is AMR working well? For example, has AMR made it easier to move between states, helped with worker shortages, improved service quality and/or made things safer? What would help it work better?
2. What can we learn from previous attempts at national electrical licensing or national licensing for other occupations?

32 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2021), *Improving occupational mobility*, <https://www.regulatoryreform.gov.au/sites/default/files/improving-occupational-mobility.pdf>.

33 Ibid.

### Box 3: Productivity Commission Interim Report – NCP analysis 2025

The Productivity Commission (PC) recently released its interim *NCP analysis 2025* report to support continued pro-competitive reform under National Competition Policy (NCP).<sup>34</sup>

The report responds to the Treasurer’s request for advice and modelling on an occupational licensing scheme for electrical trades and other high-risk occupations that provides for labour mobility nationally. The request sought advice on economic impacts as well as implementation options and a preferred pathway to implement reform.

#### Economic impacts

The PC estimated that providing labour mobility for high-risk licensed occupations across Australia could provide an ongoing boost to GDP of up to \$846 million per year. For a national electrical licensing scheme specifically, the PC estimated the upper bound of the benefits to be between **\$51 million and \$62 million per annum**.

These estimates rely on the assumption that all costs created by regulatory and legislative barriers to interstate labour mobility for electrical tradespeople, not just occupational licensing requirements, are removed. The PC also suggested that benefits will be proportional to state and territory participation in AMR. For example, the rationale for national licensing becomes increasingly clear where there is inconsistent application of AMR through exemption of specific occupations or non-participation by jurisdictions.

In the final report, the PC intends to model the distributional impacts of the reforms using a Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model.

#### Implementation options

The PC found that occupational licensing reform could promote labour mobility and improve productivity, as workers move to places where their skills are most needed and valued. According to the PC, national licensing presents an opportunity to reap the benefits of a unified labour market, particularly for electrical trades which form one of the high-risk- occupations commonly excluded by jurisdictions from AMR.

However, the PC also recognised that there may be opportunity to leverage and improve the existing AMR and East Coast Electricians schemes to generate what could effectively be a national licence, while avoiding the administrative cost of creating a national licensing scheme with unified requirements. Recognising that a national licence would require agreement on a national set of standards, the PC also cautioned that, if standards under a national licence are raised beyond what is necessary, a licensing scheme may create more costs than benefits.

#### The case for national licensing

The PC found that the fractured nature of occupational licensing across states and territories creates anti-competitive barriers to interstate labour mobility, which reduces productivity. In Australia, the PC previously estimated that the existence of interstate borders reduces labour mobility by 77%.

The PC suggested that, since AMR retains existing state-based licensing requirements, it can be quickly implemented for many occupations, although inconsistent application has hindered improvements to interstate labour mobility.

The PC suggested that national licensing may be best suited to occupations, like electrical trades, that are high risk and provide credence services: that is, services that are difficult for consumers to ascertain the quality of without expertise. Licensing is therefore important not just for safety reasons, but also as a signal of quality for consumers.

## Comparison of jurisdictions

### Extent of AMR and MR adopted by jurisdictions

Electrical tradespeople, including electricians, are employed in large numbers across all jurisdictions. According to JSA, the largest number of electricians are employed in New South Wales, Victoria and

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34 Productivity Commission (2025), *National Competition Policy analysis 2025 – interim report*

Queensland, with Western Australia and the Northern Territory possessing the largest number of electricians per capita (Table 1).<sup>35</sup>

**Table 1: Electricians by jurisdiction**

Jurisdiction	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Electricians <sup>36</sup>	57,120	41,452	46,712	14,376	30,496	2,570	2,238	2,636
Electricians per million people <sup>37</sup>	6,685	5,912	8,314	7,600	10,136	4,463	8,534	5,473

Around 12 per cent of new occupational registrations were made under mutual recognition in 2019, compared to 5 per cent in 2014. This implies at least 18,285 individuals applied for mutual recognition in 2019.<sup>38</sup> When AMR was established in 2021, it was estimated the scheme would benefit over 168,000 workers each year across all occupations.<sup>39</sup>

All jurisdictions have fully adopted and participate in the (manual) mutual recognition scheme with respect to electrical licences. However, the extent of adoption of AMR and the East Coast Electrician's Scheme (ECE) varies across states and territories. Details regarding the recognition of interstate electrical licences and exemptions to AMR are summarised below (Table 2).

The AMR scheme also includes safeguards that exclude certain individuals from AMR regardless of their jurisdiction or occupation (consistent with manual mutual recognition).<sup>40</sup> This includes workers:

- subject to disciplinary, civil or criminal action in relation to the activity or occupation
- with conditions on their licence as a result of disciplinary, civil or criminal action
- with a suspended or cancelled licence for the activity or the occupation.

35 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2025), Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release>

36 Note: Since electricians do not represent all electrical workers, and some workers in other fields hold electrical licences, these figures likely represent an underestimate of the total number of electrical licensees in each jurisdiction.

37 Treasury calculations using ABS population figures.

38 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2021), *Improving occupational mobility*, <https://www.regulatoryreform.gov.au/sites/default/files/improving-occupational-mobility.pdf>.

39 Deregulation Taskforce (nd), *AMR – information for workers and businesses*, (<https://www.regulatoryreform.gov.au/sites/default/files/amr-info-business-workers.pdf>).

40 Deregulation Taskforce (nd), *AMR – information for workers and businesses*, (<https://www.regulatoryreform.gov.au/sites/default/files/amr-info-business-workers.pdf>).

**Table 2: Extent of AMR operating in each jurisdiction**

Jurisdiction	Licences recognised	Exemptions	Other jurisdictions recognised
<b>Victoria</b>	Recognises all equivalent electrical licences from participating states through AMR. Automatically recognises specific QLD licences under East Coast Electricians (ECE) scheme.	No exemptions beyond those uniformly enforced across the AMR scheme.	AMR with all states except QLD. QLD recognised under ECE scheme.
<b>Northern Territory</b>	Recognises licences from all participating states through AMR, where licensed activities align with the <i>Electrical Work Licence</i> and <i>Sole Trader Electrical Contractor Licence</i> .	No exemptions beyond those uniformly enforced across the AMR scheme.	AMR with all states except QLD.
<b>South Australia</b>	Recognises licences from all participating states through AMR, where licensed activities align with the <i>Plumbers, Gas Fitters and Electricians Contractor's Licence</i> and Workers' Registration.	No exemptions beyond those uniformly enforced across the AMR scheme.	AMR with all states except QLD.
<b>Tasmania</b>	Recognises licences where licensed activities align with the <i>Electrical Practitioner Licence</i> and <i>Electrical Contractor Licence</i> from all participating states through AMR.	No exemptions beyond those uniformly enforced across the AMR scheme.	AMR with all states except QLD.
<b>New South Wales</b>	Recognises licences from all participating states through AMR, where licensed activities align with the <i>Endorsed Contractor Licence</i> and <i>Qualified Supervisor Certificate for disconnection and reconnection of fixed electrical equipment</i> . Automatically recognises specific ACT, QLD and VIC licences under ECE scheme.	<i>Electrical Wiring Work</i> is exempted from AMR. Home building compensation insurance is required for projects over \$20,000.	AMR with all states except QLD for some licences. ACT, QLD and VIC recognised under ECE scheme.
<b>Queensland</b>	Does not recognise any licences from any other state under the AMR scheme. However, does automatically recognise certain electrical licences through external equivalence under the Electrical Safety Regulation 2013 (Qld). <sup>41</sup>	N/A for AMR.	N/A for AMR. Certain licence classes from states recognised under external equivalence.
<b>Western Australia</b>	Does not automatically recognise electrical licences from any other state.	N/A	N/A
<b>Australian Capital Territory</b>	Does not automatically recognise electrical licences from any other state.	N/A	N/A

41 Queensland Government (2025), *Electrical Safety Regulation 2013*, <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2013-0213#sch.1>

Further, even in jurisdictions that have enacted the AMR scheme in full, licensees may still face additional requirements which can impede labour mobility. Examples include requiring licensees to:

- work within the scope of their home licence only
- notify the regulator in the jurisdiction they intend to work in, including separate processes for practitioner and contractor licences in some jurisdictions
- undertake complex and expensive processes when seeking recognition of international electrical licences, including additional training and testing.

### Collective impact of these arrangements on labour mobility across jurisdictions

Under the current framework, electrical workers based in any state (excluding Queensland) have the option to work in Victoria, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania using their interstate licence under AMR after notifying the relevant state regulator.

While licensed electrical workers from WA and the ACT can automatically work in each of these states under their home state licence, the reverse is not true. Specifically, the ACT and WA exempt electricians as an eligible occupation under the AMR scheme. Electricians who wish to work in WA or the ACT rely on the (manual) mutual recognition scheme, which requires applicants to make an application and pay an additional licensing fee to obtain the right to work in these states.

Similarly, the option to work in NSW defaults to mutual recognition for workers without a home licence recognised under the East Coast Electricians Scheme.

Recognising that Queensland does not participate in AMR, and that electrical workers are excluded as an eligible occupation under the AMR scheme in WA and the ACT, the current scheme does not allow for the seamless transition of electrical workers across Australia as a whole.

Given that there are significant inconsistencies in the application of automatic and mutual recognition schemes on electrical workers, we are interested in hearing from industry and electricians about their experience working across jurisdictions, or where there may be barriers that limit the effectiveness of existing AMR and mutual recognition arrangements.

#### Questions

3. Have you or someone you employed worked outside of your home state? What barriers or challenges did you face?
4. Do electrical licence types align well across jurisdictions? If not, how has that impacted the ability for you or someone you employ to work across states?
5. Does electrical training differ significantly across jurisdictions or training providers? If so, how has that impacted the ability for you or someone you employ to work across states?

### Safety outcomes

Electricity is an essential part of modern life but is inherently hazardous and brings risks associated with electric shock, working at height and potentially, fire. Faulty electrical installation or maintenance can cause injury or death to workers, consumers and the public and damage to property.<sup>42</sup>

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42 COAG (2013), *Decision Regulation Impact Statement - Proposal for national licensing of the electrical occupations*.

From 2000-01 to 2023-24, Australian electrical deaths per million people declined from 1.79 to 0.37.<sup>43</sup> Consumer appliances or equipment were involved in about twice the fatalities than electricity supplier assets, and more than 90 per cent of deaths associated with electricity networks were as a result of working on or near energised overhead conductors.<sup>44</sup> A comparison of electrical safety outcomes by jurisdiction is provided below (Table 3).

Governments have attempted to address the risks associated with electrical work through various mechanisms including occupational licensing, workplace health and safety (WHS) regulation, and standards and codes for undertaking work. A 2013 Decision Regulatory Impact Statement (DRIS) on the previous national licensing scheme argued that these measures have been largely successful, pointing to the relatively small number of serious injuries due to electrical contact, despite the ubiquitous provision of mains supply to Australian homes and workplaces.<sup>45</sup>

The DRIS concluded that only a subset of electrical safety incidents was attributable to the actions of licensed workers in the electrical occupations, and that there was a weak correlation between risks to consumers and different licensing models within Australia.

#### Questions

6. What are the main causes of electrical safety incidents?
7. Have changes in licence rules across states and/or changes to qualifications affected electrical safety outcomes over time?

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43 Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council (2024), Electrical Fatal Incident Data, <https://www.erac.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/ERAC-Electrical-fatality-report-2023-2024.pdf>.

44 Ibid.

45 COAG (2013), *Decision Regulation Impact Statement - Proposal for national licensing of the electrical occupations*.

**Table 3: Electrical safety outcomes by jurisdiction**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Total fatal electrical accidents from 2000-01 to 2023-24 <sup>46</sup>	117	59	92	28	53	12	18	3
Fatal electrical accidents from 2000-01 to 2023-24 (per million people in 2024) <sup>47</sup>	13.7	8.4	16.4	14.8	17.6	20.8	68.6	6.2
Total work-related fatalities for electrotechnology and telecommunications workers (2003 to 2023) <sup>48</sup>	63	28	31	14	26	2	11	2
Work-related fatalities for electrotechnology and telecommunications workers (2003 to 2023) per 100,000 workers <sup>49</sup>	4.3	2.6	2.9	4.2	4.4	2.0	15.7	3.0
Total work-related fatalities caused by contact with electricity (2003 to 2023) <sup>50</sup>	62	36	53	9	19	5	10	2
Total serious workers' compensation claims by electrotechnology and telecommunications workers (2008-09 to 2022-23) <sup>51</sup>	10,855	4,389	7,858	1,941	4,445	589	606	691
Electricity/air pressure injury hospitalisation (per 100,000 people in 2022-23) <sup>52</sup>	1.6	1.9	3.1	2.0	2.5	13.2	Not provided	Not provided

While electricians work longer hours per week and have a higher level of exposure to certain hazards than many other workers, the frequency of workers compensation claims has been consistently lower than the average for all occupations.<sup>53</sup> Over the 10 years to 2022, 44 electricians died from traumatic injuries at work, including 23 due to electrocution and 9 resulting from falls from a height.<sup>54</sup>

46 Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council (2024), *Electrical Fatal Incident Data*, <https://www.erac.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/ERAC-Electrical-fatality-report-2023-2024.pdf>.

47 Treasury calculations using ABS population figures.

48 Safe Work Australia (2025), *Work-related fatalities dashboard*, <https://data.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/interactive-data/topic/work-related-fatalities>.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Safe Work Australia (2025), *Workers' compensation dashboard*, <https://data.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/interactive-data/topic/workers-compensation>.

52 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2025), *Injury in Australia: Electricity and air pressure*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/injury/electricity-and-air-pressure>.

53 Safework Australia (2023), *WHS Profile: Electricians*, <https://data.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/profile/whs-profile-electricians>.

54 Ibid.

## Key design elements of a national scheme

A national licensing scheme for electrical occupations will need to consider various elements, including licence design, governance arrangements, legislative approach, digital and data infrastructure, and other requirements placed on licensed workers.

Key elements of *licence design* could include:

- **Licence categories:** A licence category identifies the scope of regulated work authorised to be undertaken by the licensee. Under current arrangements, jurisdictions maintain different licence categories (such as ‘electrician’, ‘electrical fitter’, or ‘electrical line worker’), with the scope of allowed work within these categories also varying across jurisdictions. A move to a national system could involve consolidating and standardising licence categories across jurisdictions while harmonising the scope of work allowed under each category. This could involve establishing nationally consistent definitions and minimum requirements for each category, with states able to require additional, modular training units for state-specific skills or activities that have clear net public benefits.
- **Fees and licence periods:** Under current arrangements, licence fees and renewal periods vary across jurisdictions. For example, licence periods can range from 1 to 5 years, with fees ranging from \$89 to \$209 per year for electrical workers (Table 4). Longer licence periods benefit licensees by requiring fewer applications and renewal probity checks. However, shorter licence periods allow for regulators to capture more up-to-date information on licensees, and more regularly provide information to licensees on changed requirements or standards.
- **Eligibility and training requirements:** Jurisdictions currently assess eligibility for licences on differing sets of requirements, including qualification-based eligibility requirements (such as skill or experience requirements, state-based competency testing, or period of work under supervision) as well as non-skills-based eligibility requirements (such as personal probity and financial probity requirements). A move to a national system could involve further harmonising requirements around tertiary training, apprenticeships (including capstone exams and workplace evidence) and non-skills-based eligibility requirements.

Potential changes to *governance arrangements* could include:

- **Establishment of a new national licensing body:** Previous attempts to establish a national licensing regime involved the creation of a new national licensing body (NOLA), intended to administer the scheme, develop policy, and manage a national register of licensees.
- **Monitoring, compliance and enforcement:** Under current arrangements, state regulators are responsible for conducting compliance and enforcement activities and overseeing conduct requirements of licensees. Introducing a national licensing scheme could facilitate a harmonised approach to various elements of regulation, including inspection regimes and disciplinary frameworks, as well as other options for undertaking monitoring and compliance, including by a national body or increased cooperation between jurisdictions.
- **Revenue sharing:** Moving to a national scheme could have implications for government revenue and may therefore require new revenue sharing arrangements. For example, removing the need for workers to hold duplicative licences in multiple jurisdictions would reduce overall state revenue but would likely come with offsetting administrative savings. The need for revenue sharing may depend on which bodies are tasked with setting licensing requirements, granting licences and undertaking monitoring, compliance and enforcement activities.

- **Governance mechanisms for resolving interjurisdictional differences:** A move to a national licensing scheme would require ongoing cooperation between all jurisdictions. Establishing governance mechanisms and forums to encourage ongoing harmonisation and enable jurisdictions to discuss different views on the operation of national licensing may help to ensure the sustainability of the scheme. Such a mechanism could also bring together regulators, industry bodies, unions and skills councils to maximise the chances of the scheme's ongoing success.
- **Transitional arrangements:** Governments may need to implement certain arrangements to ensure the smooth transition to a new licensing scheme and minimise transition costs. For example, these arrangements could consider the treatment of existing licensees, licence applicants, and workers undertaking disciplinary or court processes. Grandfathering of existing arrangements and/or providing the ability to opt-in to a new scheme could also be considered.

*Other requirements* currently imposed on some licensees include:

- **Notification requirements:** Under AMR, interstate licensees are typically required to notify the state-based regulator in the jurisdiction they wish to commence work. A national register may make it easier to achieve this requirement.
- **Obligations when moving home state:** Under AMR, a person must obtain their licence from their 'home state', which is the location of their principal place of residence and/or principal place of work. Licensees who move their primary place of residence to a new state are required to apply for a new local licence. Other arrangements for updating personal details may be more appropriate under a national licence.
- **Continuing professional development requirements:** Some jurisdictions impose continuing professional development (CPD) requirements on licensees, to ensure workers maintain their skills and are aware of changes in legislation, codes and standards. Potential alternatives to CPD include information provision, one-off training requirements, or the development of guidelines.
- **Insurance requirements:** Some jurisdictions impose insurance requirements on licensees, such as the requirement to hold professional indemnity insurance.

Potential changes to *digital and data infrastructure* include:

- **Establishment of a new national licensing register:** A move towards national licensing could be supported by a national register or other digital system for accessing licensing information. Such a register could also facilitate improved information sharing between state licensing regulators, allowing more seamless notification processes and improved safety outcomes through better targeted regulatory activities.
- **Creation of a digital licence:** A national licensing scheme could also be supported by increased adoption of digital licensing, potentially linked to a centralised licensing register as described above. Such a digital tool could provide significant benefits to workers, including by streamlining processes associated with booking inspections, providing certificates, or notifying regulators before moving across borders or undertaking high risk work. A digital licence could also facilitate improved information provision to workers, by providing easier access to state-specific requirements and/or updates to licensing requirements or standards over time.

The scheme also raises potential *legislative issues* which require careful consideration.

- **Interaction with other licensing laws and schemes:** The design of a new national scheme would need to consider how any new legislation interacts with other state laws, including WHS laws and electrical safety laws, relating to the electrical trades and other related occupations.

- **Different legislative models:** Responsibility for the regulation of occupational licensing sits with the states, with the Australian Government possessing no legislative power to recognise licences, determine occupational equivalency, or confer AMR.<sup>55</sup> Introducing a national licensing scheme may therefore require new legislation, including jurisdictions enacting the scheme through mirror legislation or a referral of powers.

**Table 4: Electrical licence fees by jurisdiction**

Jurisdiction	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
<b>Licence fees</b> (unrestricted electrical workers)	\$166 (1 year), \$280 (3 years) or \$482 (5 years)	\$445.80 (5 years)	\$93.98 (5 years)	\$331 (3 years)	\$209 (1 year) or \$685 (5 years)	\$392.70 (3 years)	\$507 (5 years)	\$227.28 (1 year), \$479.83 (3 years)
<b>Renewal fee</b>	\$32 (1 year), \$63 (3 years) or \$109 (5 years)	\$222.90 (5 years)	\$93.98 (5 years)	\$331 (3 years)	\$119 (1 year) or \$595 (5 years)	\$392.70 (3 years)	\$507 (5 years)	\$227.28 (1 year), \$479.83 (3 years)

#### Questions

8. What kinds of electrical work should be included in a national licensing scheme?
9. Are the key elements above comprehensive? What has been missed and why is it important?
10. How should the above key design elements be incorporated into a national scheme? Which elements will be most important to ensure proper operation and sustainability of the scheme?
11. What parts of existing licence systems work well and should be kept in a national scheme?
12. What transitional arrangements are required?

<sup>55</sup> Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2018), *Submission to the Select Committee on the effect of red tape on Occupational Licensing*, [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Red\\_Tape/OccupationalLicensing/Submissions](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Red_Tape/OccupationalLicensing/Submissions).

## Potential models for national licensing

We are interested in stakeholder views on potential options for implementing a licensing scheme for electrical trades that drives productivity growth and provides for labour mobility nationally, without compromising safety or quality. The scheme should ensure that competent workers can be employed anywhere in Australia, while providing flexibility for workers to respond to changes in technology and demand over time. Under any new scheme, workers and businesses should be able to easily navigate working between jurisdictions and seamlessly moving to where their skills can be most effectively utilised.

The following options describe potential scheme designs ranging from a national licensing scheme with full harmonisation (Option 1), to an alternative which proposes improvements to current licensing arrangements to support the above aims (Option 2), and a hybrid approach that combines elements of each of these (Option 3). They are presented to stimulate feedback, and are not necessarily representative of all potential implementation options.

### Option 1: A uniform national licensing scheme for electrical occupations

#### Key features

This option would replace the current system of state-based licensing with a single national licence. The scheme would aim to establish a nationally consistent approach to licence categories, the requirements to obtain and maintain a licence, and the scope of regulated work across jurisdictions. While specific details of the scheme would be developed through further consultation if this is the preferred option, other potential features of a national scheme include:

- regulatory oversight by a new national licensing authority
- establishment of a national register of licensed workers
- a national framework for legislation and policy development.

A single licence would allow electrical workers to work anywhere in Australia without having to reapply for multiple licences or pay additional fees. This scheme could build upon previous work to develop a national electrical licence undertaken by the National Occupational Licensing Authority (NOLA), as well as national licensing regimes developed for other occupations such as health practitioners (Box 4).

#### Advantages

National licensing could deliver improved labour mobility, with significant benefits for workers, businesses and consumers. Moving to a single national licence would remove differing licence requirements, and expensive and complex mutual recognition processes and exemptions, all of which impose additional costs.

State-based licensing bodies could also benefit from reduced administrative burden by consolidating responsibility for electrical licensing policy from eight bodies into one, and by removing the need to understand differing jurisdictional requirements or process interstate mutual recognition applications. These benefits are likely to be ongoing, as the costs associated with updating licensing requirements over time would be lower under a single national approach.

A national licensing scheme could also lead to improved monitoring and enforcement by regulators by facilitating national information sharing. Harmonised standards under a national licensing scheme

could also improve compliance by removing the need for interstate workers to understand differences in state-based requirements.

A national scheme could also support Australia's skilled migration system in providing clearer, streamlined visa entry requirements for potential migrants. More seamless recognition of international workers could enable the greater supply of electrical workers needed to deliver key Government priorities, including the net zero transition and housing construction.

### Disadvantages

National licensing can also impose costs. For example, national licensing may require the creation of a national licensing authority and/or national licensing register, both of which would impose one-off establishment costs as well as ongoing costs to maintain. Workers, businesses and governments would also face transition costs when moving to a new regime, including taking the time to understand new national requirements. Some workers, whose state licences cover multiple occupations, may face increased costs. New legislation would also be required to support implementation of the scheme.

Further, harmonising requirements will likely require lengthy and complex negotiation between states, and there is a risk that agreement may not be reached. Ideally, harmonisation would lead to a regime that provides the safety and other benefits sought from licensing without imposing unnecessary costs. However, in practice this can be difficult to determine where there are eight different regimes and potentially a lack of data to inform this assessment. Previous attempts at national licensing were abandoned in 2013 as jurisdictions failed to reach agreement on a single set of national requirements.

#### Box 4: National licensing case study – health practitioners

In 2010, state governments established the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) for health practitioners, to provide one scheme for registered health practitioners.<sup>56</sup> The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), through its state offices, administers NRAS and enacts the procedural framework regarding accreditation and registration standards of health practitioners.<sup>57</sup>

Each of the sixteen health professions under NRAS has a national board, which accredits study programs, acts as the decision-making body for standards and registration requirements, and investigates reported misconduct. The accreditation of study programs largely regulates the requirements and standards of health practitioners.

A national licensing scheme for electrical occupations could potentially model the institutional framework of AHPRA and NRAS, whereby state and territory offices directly manage registrations and investigate misconduct, while National Boards determine the suitability of requirements.

56 Australian Government (nd), *National Registration and Accreditation Scheme*, <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-registration-and-accreditation-scheme>.

57 Productivity Commission (2015), *Mutual recognition schemes*, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mutual-recognition-schemes/report>.

## Option 2: Extending and enhancing the existing AMR scheme

### Key features

Extending and enhancing the current AMR scheme also has the potential to achieve national labour mobility, albeit while maintaining most, if not all, of the current functions of state licensing regimes. For example, the benefits of AMR could be increased by recognising more licences, minimising exemptions and conditions on interstate licensees, and further harmonising licensing requirements across jurisdictions. This could enable all electrical workers to seamlessly move between jurisdictions without acquiring a national licence or applying for a second state/territory licence, consistent with what has already been achieved for other occupations including veterinarians (Box 5). Supported by expanded use of digital tools and information sharing, from a user's perspective, this could streamline regulatory processes and potentially offer many of the same benefits and features of a national licence.

Extending AMR would strengthen the already established scheme, while allowing jurisdictions to maintain different licences and licence requirements where necessary, and state regulators to maintain their existing roles and responsibilities. An expanded AMR could be supported by a new governance framework to support work towards further harmonisation (including for licence categories and standards) over time.

### Advantages

By utilising existing legislation and governance arrangements, extending AMR could represent a relatively simple and low-cost means of achieving improved labour mobility. When compared to a new national licensing scheme, this option could achieve similar outcomes for workers and businesses (by only requiring workers to obtain one licence) without incurring large establishment costs.

Extending AMR could provide significant benefits to workers through financial and time savings, with the Council of Australian Governments estimating savings to electrical, plumbing and property occupations of \$41 million over a 10-year period when considering AMR in 2013.<sup>58</sup> This option would also result in reduced administrative burden, with NSW estimating a \$129,000 saving per annum from minimising the processing of registrations across its state regulators.<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, extending AMR would promote regulatory competition and improve transparency by requiring jurisdictions to publish the rationale behind their decisions on compliance requirements, licensing recognition and the necessity for regulation.

### Disadvantages

Extending AMR also has limitations. For example, as with the national licensing option, enhancing the current AMR scheme would require state cooperation to remove exemptions and harmonise requirements. The complexity of the current state-based licensing framework and differences in licence categories regulated by each state would persist, raising potential difficulties for regulators undertaking monitoring and compliance. The requirement for regulators to process notifications from interstate workers, and the need for workers and business to familiarise themselves with local requirements would continue. There is also a risk that some jurisdictional differences could remain,

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58 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2021), *Improving occupational mobility*, <https://www.regulatoryreform.gov.au/sites/default/files/improving-occupational-mobility.pdf>.

59 Ibid.

such as additional licence conditions imposed on interstate workers, which would continue to act as a barrier to labour mobility. Any barriers to information transmission between regulators under current AMR arrangements would also need to be addressed, such as through new data and digital tools.

#### Box 5: AMR case study – veterinarians

Australian veterinarians have benefited from automatic national recognition of registration since 2006.<sup>60</sup> The scheme allows veterinarians in participating states to practice in another participating state without the need for a second registration.<sup>61</sup> The scheme now applies in all jurisdictions except for the Northern Territory, where the broader AMR scheme was adopted in 2021.

The Australian Veterinary Association supported and aided development of this scheme, recognising the benefits including improved labour mobility between jurisdictions, reduced labour shortages in small jurisdictions, and the ability to seamlessly utilise interstate labour during natural disasters.<sup>62</sup> The scheme is supported by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council, which encourages standardisation and provides a forum for discussion, advice and cooperation among veterinary boards in Australia and New Zealand.<sup>63</sup>

### Option 3: A hybrid approach

There may be merit in considering a hybrid approach that combines elements of each of the above options and builds towards a single national licence (Option 1) in a sequential manner. For example, this approach could involve:

- States agreeing a nationally consistent set of licence categories, definitions, fees and requirements for the licence categories that are most harmonised currently (for example, unrestricted electrical licences and lines worker licences). Other licence categories could be added to the national licensing scheme over time.
- Removing exemptions to AMR for all other licence categories, while retaining notification requirements for interstate licensees.
- States retaining authority for monitoring, compliance and enforcement and the ability to impose local conditions within their jurisdiction, where this provides a net benefit.
- Reviewing and further harmonising training and apprenticeship requirements.
- Establishing a governance mechanism to encourage states to harmonise requirements over time and ensure sustainability of the scheme.
- Introducing new digital and data tools to improve information sharing between state licensing regulators while streamlining regulatory processes and providing information to workers.

In addition to the different potential models for achieving national licensing, a range of implementation approaches exist, with varying costs and benefits. For example, the above options are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and Options 2 or 3 could represent an intermediate step towards achieving the single national licence outlined in Option 1. There may also be potential to utilise


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60 Australian Government (2023), *National Recognition of Veterinary Registration*, <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/animal/health/system/vets>.

61 Productivity Commission (2015), *Mutual recognition schemes*, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mutual-recognition-schemes/report>.

62 Ibid.

63 Australian Veterinary Boards Council (2025), *About AVBC*, <https://avbc.asn.au/about/>.



grandfathering arrangements or the ability to opt-in to gradually implement the new scheme over time while minimising transaction costs for existing licensees.

**Questions:**

13. Which national licensing option do you prefer, and why do you think it would work well?
14. Is there an alternative model that could better achieve improved labour mobility while maintaining safety and quality?
15. How could technology or data be better used to improve outcomes?